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PRESS RELEASE AND REPORT

By John Davis, CEO. the Australian Music Centre, Sydney, Australia.

PAMC 2008 GALA GRAND FINAL

On **Tuesday 8 April 2008** at Australia House in London a gala concert took place featuring the six talented finalists in the **Performing Australian Music Competition (PAMC) 2008**. The event was attended by Her Royal Highness Princess Alexandra, and an invited audience enjoyed spectacular performances delivered with poise and enthusiasm. In welcoming the audience to the event, the Acting High Commissioner, Frances Adamson, read a letter of congratulations from the Australian Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd.

The six finalists were chosen from 82 performers who auditioned for the competition last week at the Royal College of Music. Each entrant presented a 20 minute program of Australian works, along with a work from the standard repertoire in their instrumental category. The standard of performance across all entrants was exceptionally high, with the performers investing considerable efforts in learning new repertoire, and this provided the jury with a significant challenge in identifying the finalists. All entrants should indeed be commended for their efforts.

A total of 84 Australian composers' works were performed in the auditions, presenting a diverse range of musical styles and influences, and covering the spectrum of Australian instrumental and vocal repertoire.

For me, particular highlights from the finalists included:

- A powerful performance of Sulthorpe's *Irkanda 1* by Macedonian violinist Marko Pop Ristov, capturing not only the composer's musical intentions in the score, but expressing in a masterly way the spirit of loneliness experienced in the vast Australian landscape;
- A sensitive and wonderfully controlled performance of Broadstock's *Aureole* by Scottish flutist Yvonne Paterson, capturing in sound the image of a halo of light, which employed piano strings resonating with the notes of the flute line;
- A seductive performance presented by Australian guitarist Jacob Cordover, whose delicate tone and sensitive interpretations invited my ears to experience the technical strength and accuracy of his playing;
- A highly accomplished presentation by Australian pianist Eleanor Smith, whose performances of works by Margaret Sutherland and Carl Vine revealed the virtuosic compositional craft and skill of these prominent Australian composers, and convincingly communicated the strength of these works with her own virtuosity and musicality;

- The charming and seductive performance of Australian songs delivered by Australian soprano Elena Xanthoudakis, whose effectively constructed characterizations and dramatic stage presence did not detract from the purity and clarity of her voice;
- The well constructed program presented by Chinese cellist Mi Zhou, connecting Julian Yu's reworking of musical material from Bach in *Dovetailing*, alongside a work from the master himself. Her powerful rendering of Don Kay's *The Legend of Moinee* was indeed impressive, delivering a profound and passionate performance.

There are many other highlights to recall from the many fine performances in the audition rounds which will stay in my memory, too numerous to list here. Above all, I retain a vivid picture of amazingly talented young performers, passionate and committed, with accomplished technical skill and musicality, investing a great deal of hard work to ensure that their performances are as good as they can possibly be.

The significant outcomes from this competition are many and varied. Firstly, from the performers' perspectives, the discovery of new repertoire that many will continue to perform for some time to come, and the opportunity to compete with their peers at the highest possible level; secondly, for the composers featured in the competition, the opportunity for their works to be presented in the competition and beyond; for the audience, an experience of witnessing outstanding young talents presenting themselves with confidence, enthusiasm and passion, and outstanding musicianship.

The competition was only made possible with the contributions of many people and organisations, above all, the competition's Chair, Penelope Thwaites, whose vision and passion ensured the competition's success. Its ongoing sustainability however is threatened, and it can only continue if significant financial support is secured. Given the success of the two competitions to date, its demise would indeed be tragic.

John Davis
CEO, Australian Music Centre
10 April 2008

PAMC PRIZE-WINNERS

First Prize £5000 (donated by Heather de Haes)

MARKO POP RISTOV, violin (Macedonia)

Program: *Irkanda 1* by Peter Sculthorpe; *In Father's Orchard* by Sadie Harrison; and *Sonatasatz* by Brahms

Second Prize £4000 (donated by Michael Kelson)

YVONNE PATERSON, flute (Scotland)

Program: *Aureole* by Brenton Broadstock; *Nura (3rd Movt: Earth Dance)* by Ross Edwards, *Sonata (2nd Movt)* Poulenc

Kelson Encouragement Award £3000 (donated by Michael Kelson)

JACOB CORDOVER guitar (Australia)

Program: *Blackwattle Caprices* by Ross Edwards, *Stele and Dervish* by Phillip Houghton, *Prelude from Suite BWV 997* by JS Bach

The Tait Prize £1000 (donated by the Tait Memorial Trust)

ELENA XANTHOUDAKIS soprano (Australia)

Program: *The Presences* by Ron McKenzie, *Come Sleep* by Peggy Glanville-Hicks, *O Deep & Dewy Hour* by Horace Keats, selected *Cabaret Songs* by Keith Humble, *The Sprig of Thyme* by Percy Grainger, *Piangero, La Sortemia*, by GF Handel

AMF Audience Prize £1000 (Donated by the Australian Music Foundation)

ELEANOR SMITH, piano (Australia)

Program: *Chiaroscuro 2* by Margaret Sutherland, *Piano Sonata 2 (2nd movt)* by Carl Vine, *Feux D'Artifice* by Debussy

The Becker Prize £500 (donated by Russell Becker)

ELEANOR SMITH piano (Australia)

The Faber Prize music to the value of £500 (donated by Faber Music)

MI ZHOU cello (China)

Program: *Dovetailing* by Julian Yu; *The Legend of Moinee (2nd movement)* by Don Kay; and *Prelude from Cello Suite No 5* by JS Bach

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